

Disaster Recovery

Developing a Plan

Disasters affect people and their businesses throughout the world everyday. Nearly 50% of all businesses that suffer major losses never fully recover, and often they do not re-open. Within the United States, a business catches fire every five minutes, with 40% of these businesses never re-opening. However, businesses that plan for disasters by developing a Disaster Recovery Plan can dramatically increase their chances of recovery.

A Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP) provides the guidelines necessary to ensure the recovery of all vital functions of a business in the event of a disaster. It establishes proactive procedures in preparation for a disaster, evacuation and safety procedures during a disaster, and recovery procedures following a disaster. It also identifies recovery priorities that may get blurred during the havoc of a catastrophe.

The following steps can be used to assist a company in developing a DRP. These steps will vary depending on the specific operation, its location, and its needs. However, they can be used as a core to design a working DRP.

Establish a Planning Team

Developing a DRP is a time-consuming and costly project that involves input from the entire company and outside advisors, such as fire and police departments. A planning coordinator should be chosen to organize a planning committee and to ensure the plan is developed and updated. The planning committee should consist of key personnel from each department that is critical to the operations and the safety of the company. This will ensure that all responsibilities within the plan are met. A schedule and budget should also be established to identify the time, effort, and finances needed to see the project to completion. It is very important that management demonstrates its commitment to the project by initiating a mission statement that outlines the company's objectives for the plan.

Perform a Risk Assessment

The next step is to identify the types of perils that can occur, as well as their probability and the vulnerability of the specific operation. Look at each potential disaster and discuss the affects that the disaster will have within the facility and within the community. There are many types of disasters, so it is important to consider the "worst case scenario," concentrating on the disasters most likely to occur in your specific area.

Once the potential perils have been identified, it is important to review the controls that are in place to prevent a loss. Some of these loss control techniques would include:

- Smoke detectors or a sprinkler system monitored by a central station would reduce or prevent damage caused by a fire.
- Room cut-offs could be used to prevent or slow the migration of a fire.
- Security staff or burglary detection could prevent theft of property.
- Back-up information would allow the quick restoration of important files following a loss of computer equipment.
- Buildings could be retrofitted to increase the strength of the structure in earthquake-prone areas.
- Gable end roof bracing could reduce the damage caused from tornado and hurricane high winds.
- Shrubs, brush, woodpiles, and combustible debris removal could decrease the risk of damage during wildfires and forest fires.

Identify Critical Assets

During the beginning stages of DRP development, it is necessary to identify the assets or critical parts of the business that are highly susceptible to loss. This step should include:

- determining the proper value of the building
- assessing current conditions of property and collection using current values
- documenting sources of income and extra expenses, such as admissions and sales, grants, gift shop revenue, and inventory
- identifying critical machinery or equipment
- identifying critical areas of the building with concentrations of high value items

Catalogues and other collection records should be stored off site. This will assist with the identification of property following a disaster. In addition, it is important to store vital records, back-up files, and insurance documents at a secure location off-site.

Develop the Plan

Once a team has been established and a complete risk assessment has been performed, it is time to develop the plan. The basic steps of the plan will vary from business to business. The following are the basic sections traditionally needed in a plan and an outline of the sections and points that should be discussed.

Executive Summary. The executive summary should state the purpose and main objectives of the plan. Key personnel should be identified, along with their authority and responsibility. A general discussion of the types of disasters that could occur would also be included in this section of the plan.

Assignment of Responsibility. This section states who is in charge during and after a disaster. A line of authority and responsibility should be established to ensure leadership under any possible staffing scenarios. People who normally make decisions in the organization may not be available in a disaster situation. It is therefore important to train more than one individual on emergency response procedures.

Through the use of a phone list or phone tree, management can communicate with their staff to provide direction and instructions to manage the recovery procedures. The phone list should be updated periodically and provided to the members of the planning committee and the management of the company. At least one individual, usually the planning coordinator, should be given the authority to activate the phone tree and indicate the next steps to take following a disaster. There should also be strict instructions as to who will communicate with authority, employees, and media.

In the event of a disaster, there may be individuals looking to pilfer property, increasing losses and damage on-site. Employees should be provided with staff identification badges that will not only restrict access to the site but will continue to improve communication with authority, as well.

Emergency Response Procedures. This section of the DRP identifies the immediate responses following a disaster. It will give employees the tools they need to escape from or react to a disaster. All employees should be aware of the answers to these two questions whenever there is a threat: What do I do? Where do I go? There should be a subsection for every possible disaster that was identified by the planning committee

during the risk assessment. Itemized recovery steps should be conducted for each disaster, with a priority on human safety and welfare. These steps should also identify the susceptibility of the assets, collection, or equipment to damage.

Once employees have been safeguarded it is important to stabilize the building and its contents. This includes weatherization and security. It may be necessary to hire a security company to watch over the building to prevent looting. Setting up a prior contract or identifying a company within the report would assist with recovery. It may also be necessary to relocate staff, equipment, and assets to a back-up, or alternate, location. Setting up shared agreements with competitors or identifying the capacities of your company's other locations may provide emergency storage and allow operations to continue.

Recovering and Renewing Operations. Once the employees and visitors are safe and the building is stabilized, the damage needs to be assessed. There may be structural, smoke, or water damage. Contractors who are qualified to repair, rehabilitate, or replace the building and its contents should be secured and listed within the plan. The list of equipment and assets that was previously developed, prioritized, and kept off-site will be needed at this time to identify items lost in the disaster. Prioritizing this list will also ensure that efforts are geared toward the items most susceptible to damage or those with the highest value. It is important to make sure archival materials are not discarded. This can be achieved by assigning employees who are familiar with the operations and the value of items to participate in the clean up of the building. Restoration companies can also assist with the restoration of documents and collections. The contractors, engineers, architects, and restoration companies should all be identified within the plan and prepared to respond following a disaster. The cost associated with recovering and renewing operations should be identified and discussed within the plan.

On-Premises Functions and Supplies. The building manager should expect to provide personnel resources for an extended period of time during a disaster, including an evacuation team, a fire brigade, and first aid trained employees. It is important to establish in-house disaster supplies and kits based on the local and regional disasters identified in the Risk Assessment process. Verifying and checking the supplies periodically

to make sure the first aid kit will stand up in the event of a disaster are also necessary. If the building is located within an area susceptible to sudden catastrophes such as earthquakes and tornadoes, there should be enough supplies to sustain employees for a few days. The supplies should be stored in a secure location. If the disaster supply room is locked the key should be easily accessible in the event of a disaster. A budget should also be established to purchase and replenish supplies as needed.

If there are sensitive collections, emergency object handling should be clearly outlined. Copies of floor plans identifying high priority collections should be provided to the emergency evacuation team and the emergency rescue team to assist with recovery operations. Conservators should also be obtained to outline emergency conservatory procedures.

Off-Premises Functions and Supplies.

Setting up off-premise supplies and buildings will enable you to recover your operations faster and easier. An alternate disaster-operating center, such as a trailer or motor home, should be pre-arranged. A location to move the collection and other sensitive items should be identified. Arrangements can also be made with local cold storage warehouses or grocery stores to use freezer space for the storage of wet books, periodicals, and documents.

Coordinate with Outside Organizations

The internal development of the plan is complete, but sharing it with outside emergency responders will improve the effectiveness of emergency evacuation and response and will help

reduce loss. To do this, determine the following protocol with an outside agency response:

- Which entrance will responders use? Can emergency personnel reach the building in the event of a fire?
- Where and to whom do the emergency responders report?
- How will personnel communicate with outside responders?

Test the Plan

Once the plan has been written and reviewed it is important to test the plan to ensure it functions as smoothly as written. This is the time when all the kinks are worked out, so expect some areas of the plan to fail. But this is also the time to make any necessary adjustments, so that when the plan is needed it will work. Invite outside agencies and organizations that are part of your plan, including the fire department, to participate in the test.

Implement and Distribute

The last step is to implement and distribute the plan. It should be given to the company's CEO, senior managers, key members of the emergency response team, and the community response agencies. The operations of the facility are constantly changing; therefore, it is important to conduct periodic reviews of the plan and to update it at least on an annual basis.

There is a wealth of knowledge on the Internet to assist with the development of a Disaster Recovery Plan. One of my favorite web sites is <www.fema.gov>.

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Not all history is good and beautiful, but all historic sites provide an opportunity to learn and reflect on what it means to be an American. None of us will ever forget where we were or how we felt when we first learned of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York City and the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. The Pentagon Office Building Complex was designated in 1989 as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) by the Secretary of the Interior. As a prominent part of the New York City skyline, the World Trade Center was a landmark in the generic sense. Now it is the historic site of the worst terrorist attack in the history of the world.

On October 5th at the Association for Preservation Technology International Conference at the Asilomar NHL on the Monterey Peninsula, Karin Reed, Eric Hammarberg, and Derek Trelstad gave a chilling presentation on the team's rapid assessment of 51 buildings in the WTC area. The 1830s St. Nicholas Church was totally destroyed. Numerous other buildings had structural damage. As recovery operations in the WTC area continue, historic preservationists face the task of assessing and ultimately repairing damage to cultural properties—mindful that such actions so soon after the event may appear to the uninitiated as callous. But if heritage is to survive, we need to act now.

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